Dublin. June 4. 1863

My dear Mr May — Having an opportunity of enclosing a few lines to you, I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your last letter. I think you are a perfectly upright honest man and I am sure my intentions are good & yet I wonder at the difficulty we have in coming to an understanding as to passing affairs. It occurs to me that I cannot do better now than to adopt your own words in order to show you how far I agree with you. You say [illegible] & I say "War is a bad, wretched business any way, and never to be chosen, if it can be honestly, decently, honourably & righteously avoided." I think you could not have avoided this war without disgrace of the most lasting & irretrievable description. The offer of eternal slavery, your own included, was offered to you. What ought you to have done? What could you do but spurn the offer? I speak of [illegible] as "intensely natural"; and thereby give you an added proof that I see you aright & that I see your national struggle in its true light. It is on far higher grounds, I am well aware, than nationality or anything of the sort that you uphold your country now & that you condemn the "proslavery England" which R. Purvis spoke of last week at the New York meeting. I condemn proslavery England as much as any one can — but I know very well there is a much more powerful antislavery England existing in the hearts of the majority of the people, which is proved to exist in the conduct of the Lancashire Operatives, in the general respect to the blockade, in the crowded popular antislavery meetings & in the language of the best portion of the London & the Provincial press. I never doubted that you would speak & act from the old antislavery platform & from the highest moral elevation you can climb to. I know that you stand for the Government now, for its antislavery measures & these only; & condemn all others; that you are interested in its success only as Freedom succeeds & as Slavery loses, as the prospect of a just & righteous union brightens & those of apparent despotism decline. If I do not agree with you in wishing Lord Lyons sent away it is not that I care a straw for him — but that I am anxious your government for the sake of the cause should not embarrass itself with needless quarrels — I should perhaps say with avoidable quarrels. I don't think you are more earnest on all these points than I am according to my ability to think & feel. If I wished to throw dust in your eyes I would always express unqualified agreement with your views — but situated as we are at very different points of view, this kind of agreement between two rational men is impossible. I see things which you can not see or make allowance for, and vice versa. — I have heard a wise man say that Lord Lyons erred not so much in talking with the Democratic leaders as in writing officially & not privately to Earl Russell about it. I don't imagine anybody thought that Mr Adams did worse than blunder in giving the certificates to the English merchantmen. That has all blown over. — I am continually mortified, disgusted & appalled at the proSouthern & proslavery articles I read & the talk I hear — It makes me often doubt the reality of any true moral principle in the speakers & writers — some of them in my own small circle. But I know that this is not the feeling of the ~~majority~~ majority in England & Scotland. Think of all your own traitors & democrats & copperheads, & proslavery clergy. I doubt if you could get up 4000 clerical signatures to an antislavery address such as I saw yesterday in ~~an~~ a Manchester paper. Mind my enthusiasm as a British abolitionist is very weak — but I am as firm to the cause as a cause as ever.

I greatly regretted to see that Theo. Tilton called England a nation of Pirates. Now what good is done by making such charges against 20 millions of people the majority of whom abhor piracy as much as he does — millions of whom hardly know what piracy means. I was sorry too that Wendell Phillips should talk of razing Charleston & Richmond to the ground & sowing the ground with salt. Such language is revolting & mischievous. I don't like to see a good & a high souled man like Phillips deliberately tarnishing his own honorable reputation by using such shocking language.

I am sure you will admit that the stories we are wont to weekly hear of cruelty & injustice to the contrabands; of the unwillingness to admit & employ them as soldiers; of the Brigadier who said he would rather be defeated without them than victorious with their aid; of the Massachusetts Senator who begged that he might be restored to his forfeited command; of the impediments thrown in the way of all anti-slavery men and measures — that all these things naturally puzzle & disgust people here — who commonly say that the North blows hot & cold, shifts & shuffles — while the South are at least straightforward. I know this comes of ignorance & thoughtlessness — & that while the South cares for nothing but slavery, the ~~North often~~ best portion of the Northern people long & labour & fight for liberty. A common feeling exists that even now if the South chose to come back & let bygones be bygones, the North would pardon her & take her back with slavery in her company. What is your opinion on this point — for though I don't admit I by no means feel quite sure that this is not the ca

Now my dear friend. You must not — or at least you ought not — because I set down my doubts & difficulties, be ready to set me down as hostile to the cause or to the American people. Nothing would be more untrue or unjust. You have no well wishers anywhere if I am not one — though I never before felt myself so little able to be of any effectual benefit to the cause. I asked you last week to countermand my second Standard — perhaps you had better not for a while longer. I saw a very dark letter from P. Pillsbury lately he seems to be in poor health. I fear I forgot to thank you for the photograph of the Festival Hall for which I am much obliged. It is beautifully done — but how much more attractive it would be if the company could be seen sitting on the chairs — Yours ever affectionately

Richard D Webb

FRANKLIN MILLS O.
JUN 22

Rec^d June 25/63

Rev. Samuel May
Leicester
Mass.

Ms. B.1.6 v.15, p.98